

A Coin, Two Coins

by T. M. Upchurch

She never speaks but she comes most days, trailing along the pavement, looking for the warmth in his face as he sees her, before his eyes flick back to chasing strangers, left, right, over the road, into the shops and out again, *Spare us a coin, man?* She's never heard him ask, but it hangs unspoken in the sadness he pushes through his harmonica, while his hands work the old, beat-up guitar that tries to be a Gibson for his fingertips.

She always stops before she reaches him, squats on the pavement with her back to the wall, and thinks, he'd smile if he weren't so busy singing.

His songs change with the curve of the hour, but to her it's the same tune, every time. *I could be Dylan, give me a coin, I need to escape, a coin, two coins, I'd write to my mother, a coin, any coin, I could be Dylan...*

The passers by hear same-old, same-old, tuck their chins to their chests and pretend to notice something somewhere else so they don't have to look at him, because the pity hurt enough yesterday, and will hurt again soon.

Today she comes and his eyes are warm before they flick away, and the passers by keep passing as she walks to the wall. She doesn't sit down; she stands. His eyes stop chasing strangers. She stares at him. He turns to her.

They both look down and see, he's made a coin, two coins, a handful; enough for tea... Without speaking, she picks them up, takes his hand, and leads him away.

